

UNDERSTANDING THE ROOTS OF WEST AFRICAN CONFLICTS
THROUGH THE LENS OF COUP D'ÉTATS

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Strategic Studies

by

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

UNDERSTANDING THE ROOTS OF WEST AFRICAN CONFLICTS THROUGH THE LENS OF COUP D'ÉTATS, by Major John R. Morris, 70 pages.

The growing need for resources and United States (US) historical ties ensure future US involvement in the West Africa. Since 1960, the approximate end of colonialism, and the dawn of independence for most nations in West Africa, a series of Coup D'États occurred. If future US involvement is certain, should we not examine the coups through a historical lens to determine their causes? Can the study of instability in West Africa yield a pattern of results that will assist the US in applying the national instruments of power? Lastly, can the study of Coup D'États point to a recipe for stability in the region? This thesis seeks to answer these questions by studying Coup D'États' relationship with economic, external interest, ethnic/religious frictions, and military influences.

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ACRONYMS

ECIC	External Conflict Internal Cohesion
ECOMOG	Economic Community Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
INPF	Independent National Patriotic Front
LURD	Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
PMESII	Political, Military, Economic, Social, Infrastructural, Informational

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Overview

West Africa is emerging as a powerful economic and diplomatic community. The region has a booming population and vast natural resources key to economic development throughout the world. Many nations, to include the United States and emerging powers such as China have great interest in West Africa. This region of the world includes many historical tensions that may resurrect themselves as economic benefits begin to increase. This intent for this study is to serve as a tool for the US to understand where involvement in West Africa can contribute to or end conflict.

Primary Research Question

Do coups in West Africa serve as an effective tool to understand where US involvement in West Africa can contribute to or end conflict? The primary purpose of this question is to understand the ultimate effects of US involvement in the region. Effective US involvement in this paper is defined as positive long term effects in the region that last beyond one generation. This includes but is not limited to governments in the region ability to execute the following: manage trade, build and maintain infrastructure such as roads and ports, secure borders and provide security without violating human rights, provide basic health services required to prevent an epidemic, and ensuring free and fair elections in which power is transferred peacefully.

West Africa is one of the most ethnically, religious, historically, and economically diverse regions of the world. Consequently, it is immensely difficult to understand the

causes and nature of conflict in the region. The US struggled to understand the nature of the operating environment in nations such as Somalia, Iraq, and Afghanistan with significant diversity among the populace and the economy. The US failure—to fully understand these operational environments (OE)—makes it more critical to understand West Africa as the region grows in economic importance.

Secondary Research Questions

In order to answer my primary research question, “Do coups in West Africa serve as an effective tool to understand where US involvement in West Africa can contribute to or end conflict?” the answers to several other secondary research questions must be explored.

The secondary questions to be answered in this thesis are:

1. Which coups are tied to economic tensions?
2. Which coups are tied to external interests in West Africa?
3. What coups are tied to ethnic or religious tensions?
4. Which coups involve military leadership?

The purpose of these secondary questions is to frame the primary question in a manner that explores the complex diversity of issues surrounding political, military, social, and economics as related to coups in West Africa.

The intent of this research is not to determine the specific causes of coups, but rather to understand contributing factors in time and space. The researcher chooses to focus on contributing factors rather than root causes of conflict as they can only be fully understood by the political elite of a faction that is the cause of instability. This is supported by Joseph Schumpeter when he writes war is fostered by the ruling class based

on their economic or social interest (Schumpeter 2004, 243). This is further supported by Richard Rosecrance when he argues that inequality leads to conflict in domestic politics (Rosecrance 2004, 279). Between nations of economic interdependence, perceived inequalities, and a need to settle these inequalities can lead to war. These theories provide support to the secondary questions and their ability to assist in determining what contributes to instability.

The researcher argues that attempting to focus on the root cause of conflict is unnecessary as the root cause does not provide the comprehensive amount of information required to determine when to intervene or the effects of intervention. This is supported by Thucydides, who concludes war is the result of fear, pride, and interest. Thomas Hobbes argues that inequality leads to conflict as men seek to achieve or attain something they do not have to satisfy their security requirements. Hobbes continues by stating some men seek to achieve power, and exceed their security needs. He then identifies three principals' of quarrel: competition, diffidence, and glory. Furthermore, Hobbes states that war is more than just battle, but also the ability to demonstrate your ability and will to defeat your enemy over a period of time (Hobbes 1651, 46). This supports the assertion of the researcher that contributing factors of a conflict can change over the course of a campaign. Hobbes argues the key to peace is justice, which he defines as mutual trust that is the "constant of giving every man his own" (Hobbes 1651, 54). Understanding the injustices in society, which the secondary questions seek to answer, facilitate the de-escalation of conflict and help us to remain aware of the scales of justice as we seek to answer the secondary research questions.

It is imperative to understand the economy as it relates to coups as the competition for resources in West Africa must be understood. This question specifically seeks to understand which coups involve economic tensions. The question also seeks to understand the role corruption, control of banking, and the control of natural resources in relation to coups.

Second, we must understand which coups have significant external influences involved. The findings of the question will be categorized in the diplomatic, informational, military, and economic (i.e. DIME) format. The answers to this question assist in understanding the stabilizing and destabilizing effects of external influence in West Africa. In addition, the answer to this question allows for greater understanding of the effects of the application of future US involvement in West Africa

Third, we must understand where ethnic fault lines exist and the level that ethnic tensions factor into violence in West Africa. This question seeks to understand the allegiances of various ethnic groups and their propensity to violence. This question also seeks to understand the role that religion plays in destabilizing or stabilizing the region. The understanding of ethnic and religious groups allows for increased awareness of the roles they play in society, and their interaction with power.

Fourth, which coups involve military leadership? The answer to this question allows for greater understanding of not only the military's role in coups, but also their relationship with the civilian government. This question specifically addresses the national military leadership instead of the military as a whole as nearly every coup involves some level of military force or the threat of force. In addition, lower level

military leadership's role is addressed in the secondary questions related to economics and ethnic/religious issues.

Assumptions

There are a number of assumptions to discuss in order to frame the research as it applies to the primary research question, "Do coups in West Africa serve as an effective tool to understand where US involvement in West African can contribute to or end conflict?" Assumptions are ideas or concepts that the researcher believes to be true and are necessary in order to continue with the research. These assumptions must be clarified to enhance understanding within the bounds of this study.

Instability due to terrorism will be a long-term issue. The study assumes that the instability resulting from terrorism will continue to grow in West Africa. Conversely, this study assumes that this breed of terrorism will not create a failed state in West Africa similar to Somalia.

The study of history allows for identification of common threads of instability in West Africa. This assumption means that while all aspects of the Ivory Coast, Liberia, and Guinea region are not fully applicable, the findings can be inferred to establish initial assumptions about the region.

The study assumes the threat of violence or the use of violence plays a role in each coup. The purpose of this assumption is to focus on the role that military leaders play in coups, and their relationship with civilian power.

Lastly, the study assumes that the US will continue to remain involved in Liberia. This is based off the recent intervention during the Ebola crisis, and the US involvement in establishing stability in Liberia in the 1990's and 2000's.

Definitions

The following key definitions and terms provide fidelity and clarity when used in the context of this thesis. They provide a common understanding of certain concepts presented to the reader.

Coup D'État: A sudden decisive exercise of force in politics; *especially*: the violent overthrow or alteration of an existing government by a small group.

West Africa: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo (ECOWAS 2015). The ECOWAS definition is employed as it is a regional organization that asserts influence frequently to ensure peace in the region. Furthermore, ECOWAS serves as evidence of common bonds between the countries, at the very least through economic ties. Furthermore, the UN definition includes Mauritania, Sao Tome and Principe, and Saint Helena. These nations have either dramatically different geography or ethnic composition.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations and delimitations are existing or self-imposed factors that limit the scope of research and analysis. Limitations are potential weak points while delimitations set the boundaries, direct the focal point of the thesis, and can be self-imposed. Viewing West African conflicts as an observer through research means authors will include biases based on cultural backgrounds. There may be a limited amount of first person accounts of historical conflicts. In addition, future economic activity can fluctuate due to the global availability of resources and the growth of emerging economies. My time available to

conduct research will also serve as a limitation. I currently have six months remaining to complete the research and thesis defense.

The primary delimitation is this study is confined to Liberia, Ivory Coast, and Guinea. This creates the limitation of a limited study of West Africa as a whole. These countries were chosen due to Liberia's historic ties to the US and the proximity of the Ivory Coast and Guinea to Liberia. The fact that the nations are neighbors allows for a stronger analysis of both external involvement and economic effects of coups. In addition, both the Ivory Coast and Guinea are former colonies of France, but the structure of their former relationships with France evolved differently. Last, limiting the research to three countries allows this research to be focused in a more detailed region of West Africa where the US frequently intervenes. This limits the applicability of my research to countries on the fringes of West Africa such as Mali, whose demographics, history, and resources are significantly different from Liberia, Ivory Coast, and Guinea. Last, Sierra Leone, which borders Guinea and Liberia, will not be studied in detail. This creates a limitation in the ability to fully understand the destabilizing effects in the region created by Sierra Leone, a nation unique in the fact it was a British colony.

Chapter Conclusion

The next chapter, chapter 2, discusses how the literature informs answers to the following secondary research questions:

1. Which coups are tied to economic tensions?
2. Which coups are tied to external interests in West Africa?
3. What coups are tied to ethnic or religious tensions?
4. Which coups involve military leadership?

Systematically finding answers to the secondary research questions supports and informs the conclusion to the primary research question, “do coups in West Africa serve as an effective tool to understand where US involvement in West Africa can contribute to or end conflict?”

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter Introduction

Determining the answer to the primary research question, “Do coups in West Africa serve as an effective tool to understand where US involvement in West Africa can contribute to or end conflict?” requires a literature review. The purpose of this literature review is to lay the foundation for the parameters of this study. The literature review is organized by findings applied to each secondary question. This information is subsequently analyzed and used to answer the secondary research questions within chapter 4: Data Presentation and Analysis.

Economics

Economic manipulation is used by dictators to suppress wages of armed forces members. This intent is to reduce their economic influence within the country therefore impeding the military’s ability to stage a coup. In all three nations, the first cracks in a regimes ability to maintain both the military and civilian populaces allegiance appeared during the worldwide economic crisis of the 1980’s as unemployment rose among the general populace and influential military leaders saw an opportunity to exploit the economic conditions to gain power. This contributed to a series of failed coups in all three nations from 1984 until 1991.

In Guinea, upon President Conte’s death in 2008, 40 percent of the government was composed of military personnel (Bah 2012, 77). Conte was succeeded in a coup led by Captain Moussa Daddis Camara. During Conte’s descent to death, government

bureaucrats attempted to shake down bauxite producers. Guinea is the lead world exporter of bauxite and the shake down significantly reduced mining (Copley 5, 2008). Conte built a national class of wealthy leaders consisting of military officers. The wealth accumulated by some officers allowed them to build businesses that were protected by the military. This relationship worked well for those in power but physically and financially exploited those on the outside of the military and business circles.

The Ivory Coast economic mismanagement combined with a global economic crisis helped sow the seeds of instability. Despite the nation's growing economic clout, it only benefited bureaucratic elites and French foreigners. The country failed to improve the lives of the lives of average Ivory Coast citizens (N'Diaye 2000, 256). In December 1999 Ivory Coast suffered its first coup in which General Robert Guei, the former army chief, ousted President Bedie. Military officers began the coup protesting unpaid salaries, poor living conditions, and economic conditions. The seeds of the coups can be attributed to economic mismanagement and corruption that almost bankrupted the nation (N'diaya 2000, 262).

On a more junior military level, a contributing, but not major factor to the second Liberian Civil War was the large amount of young fighters who found themselves unemployed and marginalized as they were unable to gain employment and increased social status (Call 2010, 360). Furthermore, Taylor's smuggling of natural resources such as timber and diamonds out of the country excluded opposition groups from gaining economic clout. While the smuggling and hoarding of resources by the Taylor regime was fueled by greed, the effect on organizations such as Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) had an exclusionary effect that gave them a reason to fight (Call

2010, 362). In the mid 2000's, during peacekeeping operations, the UN leveraged the economic tool of power to maintain peace by placing sanctions on the import of Liberian diamonds and timber, and the export of weapons to Liberia from 2003-2008 (Call 2010, 364).

Nations that neighbor those with long standing conflicts eventually become involved in their neighbors conflict, often due to the economic strain that refugees place on the their economy. This was the case during Liberia's two civil wars that occurred in the 1990s and 2000s, when the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) became involved.

External Interests

Liberia

Liberia did not intervene in other countries affairs until Sergeant Charles Doe assumed power in a 1980 coup which deposed William Tolbert Jr from power. Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Togo, Sierra Leone did not provide recognition of Doe's Government in 1980s due to human rights violations. In response, Doe established a relationship with Libya to counter lack of recognition in West Africa. Liberia is symbolic of the political-development model that states the way a state is formed affects its conflict behavior. Therefore, Doe assumed power through violence, and subsequently Charles Taylor. Agyeman-Duah hypothesizes that radical regimes spread conflict to neighboring states through linkage politics (Agyeman-Duah 1990, 548-550). His writings, published in 1990, appear to be validated by subsequent conflict in Liberia.

The conflict in Liberia resulted in thousands of refugees pouring into neighboring countries consequently causing the ECOWAS to establish the Economic Community

Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). The ECOMOG consisted of 4,000 troops from Nigeria, Ghana, and Guinea that were stationed in Monrovia. The political plan established by ECOWAS called for President Doe to step down and Amos Sawyer, a professor, to head an interim government. Fighting continued until President Doe was killed in Monrovia by Prince Johnson's Independent National Patriotic Front (INPF) - despite the presence of ECOMOG troops. ECOMOG and the interim government struggled for legitimacy as contributing members supported President Doe early in his rule. French speaking nations such as Burkina Faso and the Ivory Coast were supporters of Charles Taylor and advocated non-interference (N'diaya 2000, 262). Violence continued to grow and become more chaotic as attacks by both Doe's and Taylor's armies against ethnic groups continued to grow. ECOMOG eventually aligned itself against Taylor's forces. In 1995, terms for an enduring cease-fire began to develop as the Ghanaian government adopted Nigeria's view that Charles Taylor must be involved in any future government. In 1996, a ceasefire went into effect; in 1997 Taylor was elected president (Call 2010, 347-369).

In 2000, another civil war erupted as attacks against the Taylor government began in the vicinity of the Guinea border and spread through the country. The attacks were led by the group LURD, who were infuriated by ethnic bias within the Taylor government. LURD consisted of fighters from multiple groups that were part of the first civil war from 1989 through 1996. In neighboring Guinea, Taylor backed fighters were creating instability, and in Sierra Leone they successfully led a coup. Guinea served as a safe haven for LURD fighters, primarily due to the common Mandingo ethnicity many of them shared with Guineans. Sekou Conneh, the military commander of LURD, was the son-in-law of Guinea's president. Charles T. Call argues that Liberia's second civil war

was shaped by regional powers such as Guinea and Sierra Leone (Call 2010, 356-357). Call also argues that international organizations such as the UN or nations such as the US did not cause the second civil war in Liberia. He does argue their lack of inaction played a role in the second civil war due to actions such as lifting shipping embargos and the re-opening of ports (Call 2010, 357-359). Call writes that after the second civil war, external involvement from 2003-2005 was effective in maintaining peace because it included a much larger international peacekeeping presence, and a more inclusive approach to governance (Call 2010, 363).

Guinea

In 1958, Guinea voted for immediate independence from France. In this vote, Guinea chose to be the only former French colony to opt out of the French Community. As a result, Guinea's orientation transitioned toward the Soviet Bloc, which enabled it to successfully build its armed forces. The constant change of regimes in West Africa in the 1960's created a sense of instability in neighboring countries. As a result, Guinea's President Toure instituted a radical strategy to bring the military firmly under his control until 1984. Guinea maintained a form of this strategy until 2010 (Bah 2015, 74-78).

Bah argues that Guinea's strategy of maintaining close control of the military by President Toure limited the "bad neighborhood effect". He argues that while Guinea experienced coups or attempted coups; they were able to avoid a civil war despite violence in neighboring nations such as Liberia and the Ivory Coast. Bah suggest that an External Conflict Internal Cohesion approach (ECIC) allowed Guinea to enhance domestic cohesion and gain external support (Bah 2012, 17). In executing this approach, Guinea was able to gain international confidence by providing peacekeepers in countries

such as Liberia, and accepting refugees. Furthermore, leaders in Guinea such as Conte were able to accuse their domestic opposition as being rebels due to the regional instability and international credibility. This strategy allowed Guinea to gain favor in the eyes of western powers such as the United States, France, and the United Kingdom (Bah 2012, 23-25). The positive effects of Guinea's stability and "good neighbor" stance were increased funding and military training by the United States (Bah 2012, 28-29). In conclusion, Bah argues that Guinea was able to use instability in neighboring states to strengthen domestic and international support for the government, especially in the remote border provinces where the government presence is minimal (Bah 2012, 30-31).

Ivory Coast

From 1959 until his death in 1993, Felix Houphouet-Boigny ruled Ivory Coast for thirty-four years. During that time period, their government had a pro-western capitalist economic and foreign policy. The government held onto power by relying on the primary "external guarantor" approach consisting of French troops and military advisors. This approach included the permanent basing of French troops and the ability to call on France to secure external and internal security.

This strategy was validated during the Houphouet-Boigny's reign as French troops effectively intervened twice (N'Diaye 2000, 252-54). In 2011, the UN/French cease fire agreement was placed in effect. Since 2011 the International Monetary Fund has provided outside support to stabilize agricultural sectors of economy. N'Diaye argues that the presence of French troops and advisors are pivotal to the Ivory Coast coup prevention strategy (N'Diaye 2000, 252). The strong relationship with the French assisted in providing stability, but created discontent among the populace, and gave the French

extreme leverage in domestic politics. Furthermore, it created mixed loyalties among military leaders, and creates an unsettling effect on the national army (N'Diaye 2000, 258-259). Lastly, the French military presence hinders the creation of civilian controlled institutions in the government (N'Diaye 2000, 260).

Ethnic/ Religious Fault Lines

Liberia

Social unrest gave way to the country's first coup in 1980 when Master Sergeant Samuel K. Doe of the Krahn ethnic group led a coup that ousted William Tolbert from power. Doe pledged to liberate indigenous Liberians from the corrupt descendants of American slaves (Sirleaf 1991, 32-35). In December 1989, 200 dissidents attacked a border town in eastern Liberia and ignited a 14-year civil war. President Doe's response, which allowed the Army to brutally and indiscriminately attack villagers, contributed to the conscription of rebel forces. The villagers who attacked by Doe's army were members of the Gio and Mano ethnic groups. Doe's anger could be traced back to 1985 when a colleague from the region led a failed coup. By spring 1990 attacks grew and two opposing rebel groups formed, the Independent National Patriotic Front (INPF), led by Prince Yormie Johnson, who broke away from Charles Taylor, and the NPFL led by Charles Taylor. The INPF formed after Taylor's NPFL killed key rebel advisor Elmer Johnson.

The second civil war was begun in 2000 by the group LURD, who were infuriated by ethnic bias within the Taylor government. Taylor's mother was of the Gola ethnic group, which comprises 95 percent of the ethnic population. His father was Americo-Liberian. LURD consisted of fighters from multiple groups that were part of the first civil

war from 1989 through 1996. Guinea served as a safe haven for LURD fighters, primarily due to the common Mandingo ethnicity many of them shared with Guineans.

Charles T. Call argues that Liberia's coups and subsequent civil wars were the result of exclusionary policies that limited various ethnicities from taking power. He also argues the results of these wars further excluded minority groups from power and consequently exclusionary economic policies. These policies were evident in the late 1990s in which Charles Taylor's most experienced civil war fighters were absorbed into the security forces. The peace building efforts in the mid-2000s corrected the ethnic exclusion that was a critical factor in the Liberian civil wars. The new government included representatives and leaders representing the warring factions. This design was intended to prevent the rise of a strongman leader (Call 2010, 363-365). In the case of Liberia, Call argues that exclusionary policies were the main instigators of the nation's instability.

Guinea

Bah states that in Guinea, and in West Africa, the military is used as a tool to unify ethnic groups. When divisions in the military break down, armed conflict, coups, and eventual civil wars erupt (Bah 2015, 85-86). Powerful militaries in Guinea and the Ivory Coast led leaders to develop presidential guard forces that enjoyed a higher status than the police or armed forces. Furthermore, he states that military leaders do not usurp junior members assuming power as they desire to maintain their social and economic status, resulting in the military's desire to protect its reputation in the face of coups.

Ivory Coast

President Houphouet-Boigny was able to maintain power until his death in 1993 through a 3,000 strong guard composed of men from his ethnicity (Baoule People) who were controlled by his political party. The homogenous ethnicity and political affiliation enabled its use as a counter to any coup conspiracy within the military. Houphouet-Boigny also exploited ethnic minorities in the military by promoting them based on loyalty to him and his political party. Bah writes, in reference to Guinea, that “perceived common identity is likely to have strengthened unity among members of the military establishment and prevented the country from descending into coup d’etat induced armed conflicts” (Bah 2015, 85). The Ivory Coast leaders attempted a similar civilian-military governing policy, but N’Diaye believes this policy leads to an eventual coup (N’Diaye 2000, 247).

In 2011, the country plunged into a civil war after Laurent Bgabgo refused to accept the November 2010 UN certified election results. When Bgabgo refused to accept the results, the troops supporting President-elect Alasanne Quattara marched from the north to the south to seize power. The election tensions served as the spark that ignited long-standing ethnic tensions between the Sunni Muslim north and Christian south.

N’Diaye writes that the attempted 1991 coup was partially the result of the treatment of ethnic minorities in the military (N’Diaye 2000, 255-256). He further states that ethnic manipulation of the military is one of the four factors that increase coup vulnerability, as evidenced by the country’s 1999 coup (N’Diaye 2000, 259-262).

Military

Liberia

In December 1989, after experiencing four years of Doe's corrupt governance, 200 dissidents attacked a border town in eastern Liberia and ignited a 14-year civil war. President Doe's response, which allowed the Army to brutally and indiscriminately attack villagers, contributed to the conscription of rebel forces. Liberia's violent rebirth under Doe, then Taylor, set the stage for violence. This supports the political development hypothesis that a radical, violent birth of a nation leads to radical, violent means to deal with conflict (Agymon-Duah 1990, 549). The Liberian military was disbanded and rebuilt after the last civil war. In General Rodriguez's testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee, he stated the Liberian military is demonstrating the ability to lead through a crisis, as was evident during the Ebola crisis of 2014 (Rodriguez 2016, 9).

Guinea

In 1984, the Guinea military - led by Lansana Conte - seized power in a coup after the death of President Toure and held power for 26 years. Conte ruled for 24 years until his death in 2008 by maintaining his military status despite being president. He interlaced his government with both civilian and military leaders (Copley 2008, 5-6). Conte held a firm grip on the government where the military led from behind until the 1993 election. This election signaled the beginning of deteriorating support for Conte's People's Unity Party, which consequently forced him to allow the military to gradually assert itself in governmental matters to ensure their support. Conte's style of governance was so effective in maintaining power that he was reinstated after two coups in 1985 and 1996. His success was the result of a stability model in which key military leaders were ensured

a comfortable life as long as he held power. In 1996, Conte was reinstated after he consented to junior soldiers who “demanded back pay, a salary increase, and better living conditions” (Bah 2012, 77).

Upon Conte’s death, 40 percent of the government was composed of military personnel. Conte was succeeded in a coup led by Captain Moussa Daddis Camara. His government promised a two-year transition period that would end with free elections in December 2010 (Hopper 2009). In 2009 protestors attended President Camara’s rally in the nation’s largest soccer stadium. The military’s Presidential Guards responded by killing fifty-seven civilians. When the commander of the guards realized he was the scapegoat for the killings, he attempted to assassinate Camara by shooting him in the head. The military eventually decided to turn control of the government over to civilians after this incident. In November 2010, Alpha Conde was declared the winner of free elections (Hopper 2009).

Conte built a national class of wealthy leaders consisting of military officers. The wealth accumulated by some officers allowed them to build businesses that were protected by the military. Some argue that Guinea successfully established a stable government during a period of instability in West Africa as a result of the heavy influence of the military. “The institution of the army has been used in Guinea as an instrument to achieve political, economic, and social goals through the militarization of public administration, the creation of a military–business nexus, and the impunity of the armed forces” (Bah 2015, 75). Bah argues that this pattern provides stability, but the cohesiveness of the military morphs into that of an ethnicity. Consequently, this leads to

corruption and impunity as the military gains power within a nation's economy and their social ties increase (Bah 2015, 79-80).

Ivory Coast

The Ivory Coast's first President, Houphouet-Boigny used intimidation and political influence to maintain control over the military during his time in power from 1959 through 1993. He employed his 3,000 man Republican Guard composed of men solely from his ethnicity and political party as a counter to the military's ability to stage a coup. The other major tool used was the politicization of the military. Ethnic minorities in the military were promoted based on loyalty to Houphouet-Boigny and his political party. In addition, military funding never faced the budget cuts that other government ministries endured during economic crisis. Last, military leaders were given positions in industry and government ministries to ensure their loyalty (Jet 2000).

In December 1999, Ivory Coast suffered its first coup in which President Bedie, who assumed power in 1993, was ousted. General Robert Guei, the former army chief, led the coup. Military officers began the coup protesting unpaid salaries, poor living conditions, and economic conditions. Guei replaced Bedie's cabinet with military officers. The seeds of the Ivory Coast's coups can be partially attributed the politicization of the military. In October 2000, Guei held an election in which Laurent Bgabgo won. Guei was forced to step aside after a series of protests. In 2002, the military attempted another coup and rebel forces from the Sunni Muslim north claimed the northern half of the country. In 2007, the civil war ended with the signing of the Quagadougou Political Agreement brokered by the African Union, the UN, and France. This agreement placed rebel leader Guillaume Soro as the Prime Minister (CIA 2011, 168-171).

The political involvement of the military in Ivory Coast politics led to the eventual instability and prevented the country from attaining true democratic governance. Heavy politicization of the military also facilitated further fracturing of the government as factions of the military are predisposed to choosing sides during civilian disputes, making the probability of violence greater (N'Diaye 2000, 255-260).

Chapter Conclusion

The review of the literature review provides insight into the secondary research questions. The first secondary research question validates that economic instability plays a significant role in contributing to coups. The roles of external actors, primarily neighboring countries that share the same ethnic group, embolden forces aligned against the government. Major powers such as the United States, the Soviet Union, and France play a significant role in bringing stability to chaotic situations. Regional organizations such as ECOWAS bring limited stability due to their close ties to the issues and ethnic groups at the heart of the violence. International governing organizations such as the UN - who partners with a major power - are the most effective in bringing stability to West Africa. Military leadership tends to provide stability for the first 20-30 years after a nation gains independence, but nations typically fail to develop civilian leadership capable of developing a more sophisticated economy that will meet the nation's needs. Conversely, the politicization of the military can increase coup vulnerability (N'Diaye 2000, 261). The answers to the remaining secondary research questions will be presented in the course of chapter 4. The next chapter, chapter 3, will outline the research methodology for this study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Chapter Introduction

The researcher will employ several methods to answer the primary research question, “Do coups in West Africa serve as an effective tool to understand where US involvement in West African can contribute to or end conflict?” as well as the secondary research questions that shape this study. Those methods include a review of literature, development of an operational approach, and application of evaluation criteria. The resulting answers to the secondary research questions, after compilation, will lead to answering the primary research question.

This research begins with a review of literature. As introduced in the last chapter, determining if coups in West Africa serve as an effective tool to understand where US involvement in West African can contribute to or end conflict requires study of each nation’s recent history and understanding of expert analysis. The secondary research questions will simultaneously be researched through historical investigation and expert analysis in order to understand the operational environment of West Africa. Then, quantitative data derived from the secondary research questions is employed as evaluation criteria to assist in identifying the best answer to the primary research question. Finally, based on the application of the evaluation criteria, a conclusion is drawn and the primary research question answered. Based on the research findings and the answer to the primary research question, the last step is drawing conclusions and recommending a direction for future research.

Operational Approach

The Political object is the goal, war is the means of reaching it, and the means can never be considered in isolation from their purposes.

— Carl von Clausewitz

Once the review of literature is complete, more must be done to allow readers to both conceptualize the operational environment and its end state. We must develop an operational approach. An operational approach describes how to “change current conditions to the desired future conditions” (Kem 2012, 52). In this scenario, the operational approach will be reversed engineered. The current security environment will serve as the desired end state, and secondary research questions will serve as lines of effort (LOE). This method of interpreting the operational approach allows us to understand and visualize the “how” in relation to coups. This proposed operational approach will not be a comprehensive list of all events contributing to coups. Instead, it will describe broad concepts (Kem 2012, 52). The visual framework of the operational approach is depicted in figure 1. By depicting the operational approach in this manner, the relationships between current and future conditions, objectives, and the time frame become more understandable. In this modified operational approach, current conditions equate to the nation’s independence or history beginning in 1960, and future conditions equate to the current security environment.

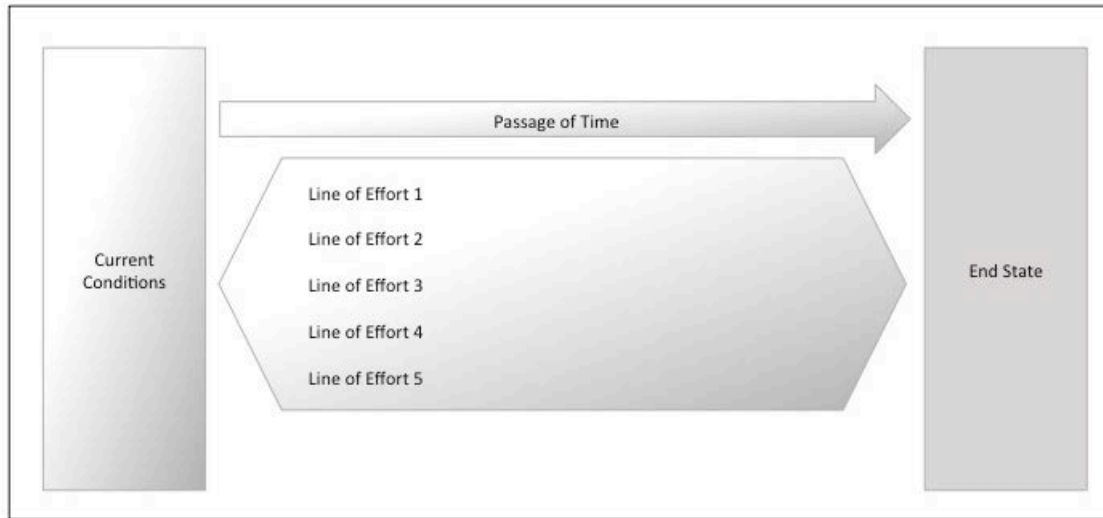


Figure 1. Operational Approach–Generic

Source: Jack D. Kem, *Planning for Action: Campaign Concepts and Tools* (Ft. Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2012), 52.

The ways in which tasks are organized is along lines of effort. “A line of effort is a line that links multiple tasks using the logic of purpose rather than geographical reference to focus efforts toward establishing operational and strategic conditions” (Headquarters, Department of the Army 2012, 4-5). The tasks equate to secondary research questions and are placed along lines of effort. Key events will be categorized as they are associated with an LOE and in accordance with the date or dates they occurred. Events take the place of tasks in this reversed operational approach.

Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation criteria are used for both military and civilian purposes because they can help establish if actions are suitable to achieve the desired results and “determine if the course of action is the best course of action to accomplish the mission” (Kem 2012,

223). The key evaluation criterion that must be defined by the researcher is “significant events,” which in the context of this thesis, refers to events that create the conditions for a coup or directly cause a coup.

The evaluation criteria will provide a template of the operational environment that can be used to determine if coups in West Africa serve as an effective tool to understand where US involvement in West Africa can contribute to or end conflict. Table 1 depicts the set of criteria that will be applied to the research, allowing the researcher to determine if the secondary research question validates the primary research question. First, each criterion will be addressed individually and then aggregated in chapter 4. The issues surrounding stability will be discussed in chapter 5.

Table 1. Response Evaluation Criteria			
Question	Minor (1 point)	Major (2 points)	Coup (3 points)
1) Instability tied to economic tensions?			
2) Instability tied to external interests in West Africa?			
3) Instability tied to ethnic or religious tensions?			
4) Instability involving military leadership?			

Source: Created by author based on Sylvan Smith, “If We Won’t, Who Will? The Employment of the United States Army to Combat Potential Pandemic Outbreaks in West Africa” (Master’s thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2015), 26.

The four evaluation criteria mirror the secondary research questions. These were chosen as they mirror key aspects of the Army's PMESII construct used to understand the operational environment. The secondary research questions summarize PMESII into four categories focusing on the military, economic, social, and political functions as applied to West Africa. Clarifying the gray area is necessary because coups are usually not limited to a single event, but rather a series of events.

Coups are often a stew of economic disenfranchisement, political/military opportunist, and rival ethnic/religious factions seeking power. This stew comes to a boil when an economic crisis or regional instability stokes the flames of anger that an opportunist can exploit. The components of the stew are criteria, which are not equal in the contribution to each event of instability. As criteria is applied to instability events by country, a judgment will be made and defended as to where on the two parts scale of contribution it lies. The two-part scale delineates whether the criterion served as the primary instigator of instability and assigned two points or the secondary instigator of instability and assigned one point. Events will be judged based on their level of severity: minor/violent protest (one point), major/failed coup (two points), or coup/civil war (three points). Once aggregated, the resulting determination of the evaluation criteria serves as an indicator of the stability within that area of the operating environment in West Africa. The highest score indicates the level of instability within those evaluation criteria. The weights will be applied to the operational approach to be discussed in chapter 4 as the research leads to answering the primary research question.

Research Methodology

The following is the step-by-step approach for the research in this thesis:

Step 1: The literature review follows a historical research timeline, which focuses on the end of colonial influence (1950-1960) by nation in West Africa until 2015. The intent of the timeline is to capture how external relationships with Europe and Asia affected conflict within West Africa. The goal is to determine where coups have occurred. The secondary goal is to focus on the secondary research questions and their relationships with coups. The last area of focus is to document trends that bring stability in West Africa. The information gained from answering the secondary research questions will answer the primary research question. This literature review will be in chapter 2.

Step 2: Once complete with the literature review, the researcher will compile the data gained from the secondary research questions and depict the findings. The findings will be depicted through an Operational Approach framework and lines of effort. .

Step 3: The third step in the research design is to develop evaluation criteria and apply to the following secondary research questions:

1. Which coups are tied to economic tensions?
2. Which coups are tied to external interests in West Africa?
3. What coups are tied to ethnic or religious tensions?
4. Which coups involve military leadership?

Step 4: The fourth step is compilation of data once the evaluation criteria is applied. Once the data is applied to the operational approach, the primary research question should be answered.

Step 5: Finally, the last step in the research design is to draw conclusions and present recommendations for future research.

Threats to Validity and Biases

There are a several issues that pose a threat to validity and bias to the research. Threats to validity affect the accuracy of the research and soundness of the conclusion. Threats include the application of history to present conflicts, as we tend to frame each conflict or dispute in the context of the most recent dispute. Biases, also known as psychological traps, threaten the validity of this research. When initiating the research, the researcher understood what the answers might be to the primary and secondary research questions. Bias most threatens the third research question, “what coups are tied to ethnic or religious tensions? This is because the researcher served and trained in environments where religious and ethnic conflict serves as primary driving forces of violence. This leads to the confirming evidence trap that subconsciously influences the choice of sources and interpretations of resources causing more weight to be placed on evidence supporting the researcher’s original thoughts. The researchers understanding of his biases and consultation with committee members serve to mitigate threats to validity.

Chapter Conclusion

This type of research methodology is designed to answer the primary research question in a logical, simple, and brief manner. The methodology also incorporates mitigating factors to counter threats to validity, biases, limitations, and delimitations. The review of literature, development of an operational approach, and application of evaluation criteria, which result in answers to the secondary research questions after

aggregation, guide this study toward answering the primary research question, “Do coups in West Africa serve as an effective tool to understand where US involvement in West Africa can contribute to or end conflict?” The next chapter, chapter 4, contains an analysis of the data collected within this study.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

Chapter Introduction

This chapter presents the information found through research contained in the literature review. The chapter presents the findings as discussed in the chapter 3 research methodology through employment of an operational approach and evaluation criteria. The literature review and research methodology answer the secondary research questions. Information compiled from the secondary research questions answer the primary research question, “Do coups in West Africa serve as an effective tool to understand where US involvement in West Africa can contribute to or end conflict?”

Step 1: Results of the Literature Review

West Africa suffers from religious, ethnic, national, and historic conflicts that breed instability and results in slow economic growth. In the *Washington Quarterly*, Seth Kaplan writes the ability to develop regional governmental and trade organizations is further inhibited by “officials who profit from disparate national policies, and a general lack of capacity and political will to move forward.” Historical and personal rivalries between and within states, and reluctance to compromise inhibit any attempts to assemble significant regional economic or security organization. This is further aggravated by historic differences between English and French speaking nations. The end result is an economic environment plagued by poor security and regional infrastructure cost that is among highest in world (Kaplan 2006, 87-97).

History of West Africa Coups

The post-colonial rule in West Africa (1957-2015) is marked by internal rivalries and external influence. Ethnic rivalries within modern political boundaries began to manifest themselves in the late 1950s through a series of coups. Between 1956 through 1984, 55 percent of all coups, 1/3 of attempted coups, and 1/2 of reported plots on the African continent took place in West Africa. The coups began as politically based between ruling factions; by the mid-1960s, the militaries began to initiate coups. Initially the militaries patterned themselves as apolitical in a manner similar to their former colonial overlords. By 1985, only four West African nations had not suffered a military coup. The military coups were either conformist or radical in nature. The conformist coups lack the dramatic changes in governmental policy and can morph into a civilian led government. The radical coups tend to lead to dramatic changes in government and alignment. The military coups eventually gave way to conflicts between nations due to the harboring of dissidents and the external influence of nations such as Libya (Agyeman-Duah 1990, 547-70).

Common Threads

Common threads that lead to coups include disenfranchisement of the political opposition, the inability to govern, and external influence. The initial instigator of coups appears to be the disenfranchisement of the political opposition. The inability to govern and peacefully negotiate leads to the party in power stripping the opposition of power through both legal means and violence. The first sets of coups are executed approximately five years after independence; the party in power effectively governs for a short time period. As economic issues or violence erupts, they begin to consolidate

power. After ten to fifteen years, another coup is successful and the party that rises to power promotes or is unable to control corruption. The resulting economic difficulties and poverty lead to violence, and the cycle often repeats itself every two to four years until United Nations peacekeepers arrive for a sustained period of time. The presence of peacekeepers results in increased periods of stability, such as the case in Sierra Leone and Liberia (Akam 2012, 28-33). African powers such as the Gadhafi government in Libya supported coups Burkina Faso and Ghana, and supported the corrupt government of Doe in Liberia (Agyeman-Duah 1990, 563). During periods of stability in Nigeria and Liberia, they exerted influence on neighbors such as Sierra Leone and Ghana that led to instability

Economic

The role of the economy in triggering coups in West Africa is the direct consequence of loyalty to key power brokers rather than the citizens of the country. The initial tension in most West African countries grows out of corruption resulting from dictators providing military leaders jobs in key industries and in the government bureaucracy. These leaders within the government fail to build or maintain infrastructure, resulting in diminishing internal or external investment in the country (N'Diaye 2000, 256-257). This was prominent in Guinea and Ivory Coast. The situation is compounded primarily by unqualified military leaders who assume control of industry, which is most evident in Guinea where the bauxite production was limited by military control of the mines (Copley 2008, 4-5). Eventually, the infrastructure and industry decay, leading to high unemployment and often the second cycle of instability after the initial coup.

The external and internal needs for economic stability in West Africa drove the development of the region's most significant organization, ECOWAS. The organization was used as a tool in an attempt to end the Liberian Civil War of the 1990s.

External Interest

External interest involvement in West African instability can be classified into three categories:

1. Regional Interest: Nations in West Africa become involved in neighboring nation's conflict due to economic spillover effects and shared ethnic interests.
2. International Governmental Organizations: The United Nations typically becomes involved after a conflict becomes uncontrollable. Common triggers include the conflict spreading outside nation's boundaries, attacks against aid organizations, and excessive war crime violations. Attacks against aid organizations and significant civilian casualties play a key role in involving international governmental organizations.
3. External World Powers: World powers play a significant role in maintaining stability in West Africa. Recently, UN sponsored stability/peacekeeping operations have been extremely effective. The strongest example is France's role in maintaining the 2011 UN sponsored ceasefire in the Ivory Coast. Guinea was able to maintain stability through Soviet military training and aid that allowed President Toure to hold power from 1958 until 1984 while ensuring there was no other external involvement in the country (Bah 2015, 74-78). Furthermore, the perception of stability in Guinea during the 1980s

and 1990s persuaded western powers to provide financial support and military training (Bah 2012, 28-29).

Ethnic/Religious Fault Lines

The primary fault lines in this study are shared by Liberia and Guinea. The shared ethnicities of the two nations contribute to conflicts. In the Ivory Coast, friction between the northern Sunni Muslims and southern Christian populations contributes to conflict.

The roots of the ethnic tensions in Liberia arise from the larger ethnic friction in the country. The historical ethnic tension exists between the Americo-Liberians, who are descendants of American slaves, and the indigenous Liberians who are members of a variety of ethnic groups. These tensions resulted ascension of Charles Doe, a non-commissioned officer in the Liberian Army, to power in the countries first coup since its founding in 1847. Doe seized power from William Tolbert, an Americo-Liberian (Sirleaf 1991).

In 1985, Doe's indigenous coalition began to break apart when his army attacked the members of the Gio and Mano ethnic group. Doe's anger could be traced back to 1985 when a colleague from the region led a failed coup. Eventually the first Liberian civil war erupted in 1989 and ended in 1997 when Charles Taylor assumed power. In 2000 as second civil war erupted in which Taylor, whose mother was of the majority Gola ethnicity, began attacking minority members of the Mandingo ethnicity. Consequently, the group LURD was formed and Guinea served as their safe haven. LURD consisted primarily of members of the Mandingo ethnicity, who are also the majority ethnicity in Guinea (Call 2010, 352-355).

The military is also a tool used to maintain control of ethnic minorities in Guinea and the Ivory Coast. Initially, President Houphouet-Boigny of the Ivory Coast established his own Republican Guard composed of his ethnicity and loyal to his party to serve as a deterrent to any military coup that was effective from 1958 until 1993. He also promoted minority ethnicities in the military based on their loyalty to him (N'Diaye 2000, 255).

Military

The military of the Ivory Coast and Guinea are constructed in a manner in which the President traditionally maintains a force approximately the size of a US brigade that is loyal to the president due to ethnic or political affiliations. This force is largely separate from the nation's traditional military forces. In both countries, the military was used as a way to develop infrastructure and maintain stability. Both countries used the military to employ large numbers of people. In order to keep their opponents from other ethnicities or political parties appeased, minority ethnicities were often given high-ranking military positions that also allowed them oversight of key business sectors or government bureaucracies. This counter weight method of maintaining stability within the country was effective as long as military pay and benefits were sufficient to a point that the presidential guard force could handle dissidents.

The counterweight method of maintaining stability through the military began to unravel after the death of the nation's first leader; it then descends into chaos during the second leader's first economic crisis. Guinea first experienced this in 1984 when their first successful coup happened after the death of President Toure. Lansana Conte assumed power and ruled until 2008. In 1993, after elections signaled the paradigm of the military leading from behind would no longer work. After attempted coups in 1985 and

1996, he had to increase military employment in the government. By the time of Conte's death in 2008, 40 percent of government was composed of members of the military (Bah 2015, 76). President Moussa Camara continued Guinea's slide towards complete military authoritarian control until 2009 when the military decided to turn the government over to civilian leaders after widespread unrest (Copley 2008, 4-5).

The Ivory Coast maintained a similar politicization of the military as Guinea. As the world economy slid into recession in the mid-1980s, the government lost the ability to finance the military - and provide for its citizens as a result of world commodity prices falling and excessive borrowing (N'Diaye 2000, 256-258). This led to a disintegration of the one party system in 1990 as violent opposition led to elections. The ruling party was able to maintain power through unfair and unfree elections. In 1993, after the death of President Houphouet-Boigny, President Konan Bedie assumed power. Bedie reduced cooperation with the opposition and employed violence and repression. The policies of the 1980s and political response in the 1990s led to two suspected coups attempts in 1991 and 1995 (N'Diaye 2000, 255-257).

In 1999, the Ivory Coast experienced its first successful coup. General Robert Guei, the former army chief, led the coup (Jet 2000). Military officers began the coup protesting unpaid salaries, poor living conditions, and economic conditions. The coup was evidence of a continuing downward spiral of violence in which the government became more militarized in order to pacify potential opposition. In 2002, another coup took place as Sunni Muslims in the north rebelled against the government. Eventually this led to two civil wars due to poor government performance and unfree elections. In 2011,

the country agreed to French-led UN intervention which resulted in stability and steady economic growth (CIA 2011, 168-171).

Step 2: Proposed Operational Approach

The second step is the employment of the proposed operational approach. The operational approach helps to answer the primary research question, “Do coups in West Africa serve as an effective tool to understand where US involvement in West Africa can contribute to or end conflict?” The operational approach used to answer this question is depicted in figure 2. The operational approach employs four lines of effort that mirror the first four secondary research questions. This is framed on the top from left to right with a timeline from 1960 until 2015. The far left depicts 1960, a relatively stable time in each country that was studied, and the approximate date of independence for the Ivory Coast and Guinea. The far right depicts 2016, another period of stability for Guinea, the Ivory Coast, and Liberia. Within each line of effort, a row is set aside to depict instability and the condition of each line of effort within each country by color.

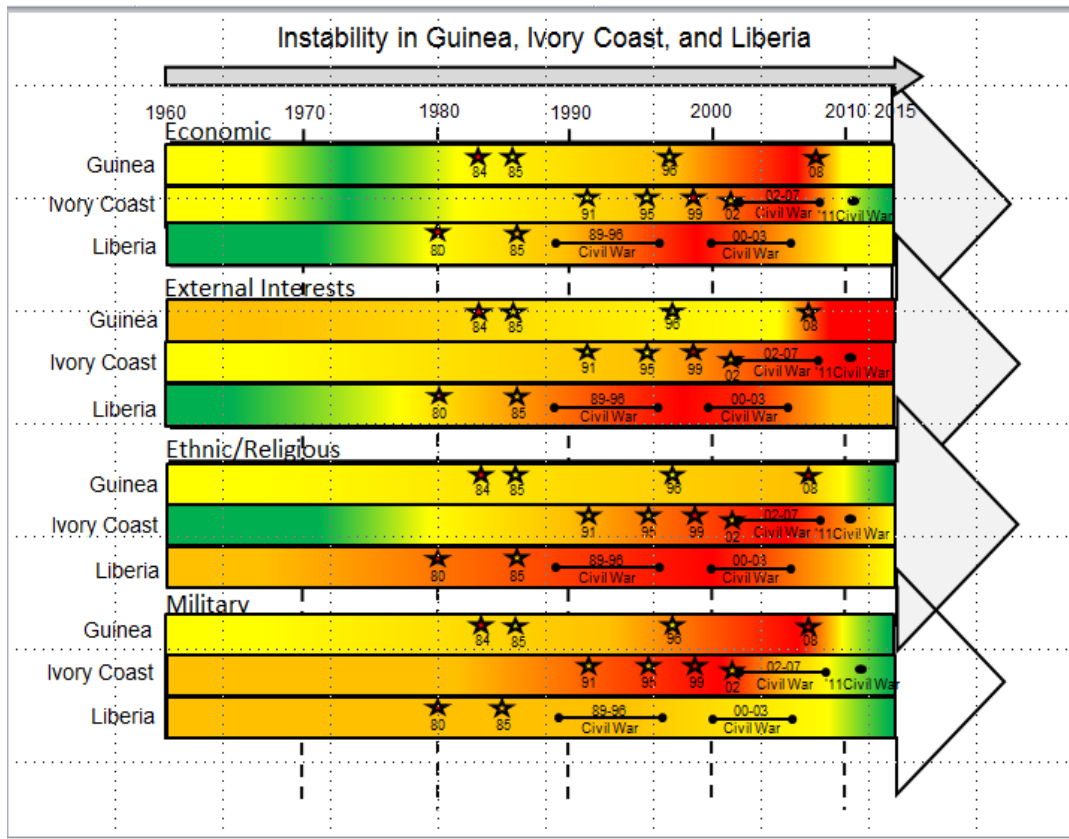


Figure 2. Operational Approach–Guinea, Ivory Coast, and Liberia Instability

Source: Jack D. Kem, *Planning for Action: Campaign Concepts and Tools* (Ft. Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2012), 52.

The steps between the starting conditions and the end state allow us to visualize how the lines of effort, or secondary questions, give us a greater understanding of the operational environment in the context of time. Furthermore, it establishes a pattern of understanding of the roles of coups, PMESII, and instability.

Within the row depicting each country, the color-coding represents the situation as applied to each line of effort. In the economic line of effort, green represents a strong economic situation, and red represents a dire economic situation. In the external interest line of effort, red represents heavy external involvement by a neighbor, regional, or world

power. Green represents minimal external involvement. Ethnic and religious tensions are depicted in the third line of effort. Green represents minimal to no ethnic tensions; red represents intense ethnic tensions leading to coups or violence. Military involvement in government affairs represents the third line of effort. Green represents minimal or no military involvement in traditionally civilian bureaucracies and industry. Red represents over 30 percent involvement of the military in traditionally civilian sectors of society. Each line of effort depicts coups and civil wars that occurred since 1960 for each country, along each line of effort. A red star represents a coup, while a yellow star represents an attempted coup. The coups and civil wars are not always tied to a poor condition such as economic issues. Consequently, during a period of high ethnic tensions the reader may find general stability.

Economics

The first line of effort represents the economic situation within each nation. In Guinea the situation goes from yellow to a high rate of growth in the 1970s as there is demonstrated stability both internally and externally under the leadership of President Toure. The situation in the Ivory Coast and Liberia largely mirror this in the 1970s, as leaders were able to ride the stable economic growth until the late 1970s. Despite the worsening economic situation of the late 1970s and 1980s, Guinea and the Ivory Coast were able to avoid a successful coup until the death of a strong experienced leader.

The first nation to experience a successful coup aligned with a faltering world economy was Liberia in 1980. William Tubman, ruled from 1944 until his death in 1971. His successor, William Tolbert, was unable to maintain stability within the country and fell to a coup led by Samuel Doe, an NCO in the military. Liberia continued to suffer

instability with attempted coups in 1985 and a civil war that erupted in 1989.

Simultaneously, the Ivory Coast suffered instability in the 1980s due to a drop in worldwide commodity prices (Sirleaf 1991). During this period, the nation only suffered an attempted coup in 1991 as longtime President Houphouet-Boigny held power for 34 years until his death in 1993. He and his successor President Konan Bedie held power by countering potential adversaries within the military with the Republican Guard and lucrative positions within the government (N'Diaye 2000, 255-258).

Guinea suffered its first coup in 1984 after the death of President Toure when Lansana Conte and the military assumed power (Bah 2015, 75). A second round of coups or civil war engulfed all three nations in the mid to late 1990s as violence inhibited economic development in each nation. Furthermore, growing military control of the government in the Ivory Coast and Guinea contributed to inhibited economic development as military leaders rather than experts led the economy. In the late 1990s and into the mid-2000s the economic situation in each nation coincided with a rise in instability beginning in Liberia as the second civil war was in full swing from 2000-2003, then in the Ivory Coast as they plunged into civil war from 2002-2007 and then again in 2011. In Guinea economic instability culminated at the same time as political instability in 2008. As political stability returned, and violence decreased, economic growth returned to each nation shortly thereafter.

External

External involvement in Guinea, and the Ivory Coast was effective from their independence until the 1980s as economic troubles began to contribute to political instability. France was heavily involved in supporting the Ivory Coast and the Soviet

Union was active in supporting development in Guinea. During this period, Liberia had minimal external involvement and remained out of other nations affairs under President Tolbert's leadership (Sirleaf 1991).

Beginning in the 1980s, lack of external involvement in Guinea and the Ivory Coast led to coups. Guinea suffered two coups, one being successful in 1984 after the death of President Toure (Bah 2015, 73-79). The Ivory Coast subsequently suffered a failed coup in 1991 prior to the death of President Houphouet-Boigny in 1993. In both cases, the Soviet Union and France involvement began to decrease during this period (N'Diaye 2000, 255-256). France gradually disengaged in the Ivory Coast as increasing amounts of violence and brutality was used to suppress the opposition (N'Diaye 2000, 262). This pattern continued until the mid-1990s as Guinea experienced an attempted military coup in 1996 and the Ivory Coast experienced a failed coup in 1995 and a successful coup in 1999.

In the cases of each nation during the 1980s and 1990s, the void left by major powers was filled by neighboring nations. Initially, as violence grew and minority ethnicities were targeted, a neighboring nation with a large population of the targeted minority often served as a safe haven, and sometimes as an active trainer of rebel forces. This pattern of violence fueled the two civil wars in Liberia during the 1990s and the early 2000s. The growth of instability in Liberia contributed to the involvement of ECOMAG, a regional peacekeeping force, in the Liberian conflict in order to limit economic damage to the region by preventing further export of violence. This effort failed but eventually in the mid-late 2000, powers began to collaborate with international governmental organizations to instill peace in the region. This first collaboration began in

Liberia as Sierra Leone indicted President Charles Taylor of war crimes and referred the charges to the UN. Simultaneously, the United States sent naval forces to the coast of Liberia. In 2003, Taylor resigned and the two civil wars culminated in the peaceful election of President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf (Call 2010, 347-369). Similar international involvement in Guinea and the Ivory Coast resulted in peace around 2010.

Ethnic/Religious

Ethnic and Religious conflict did not play a major role until 1980 when it served as the primary instigator of the Liberian coup where Charles Doe seized power (Sirleaf 1991). This issue served as the primary contributor to violence in Liberia for the next 23 years. In 1985 an attempted Liberian coup was fueled by attacks against Mandingo ethnic minorities who held a majority in Guinea (Sirleaf 1991). During the 1980's, Guinea suffered a coup after President Toure died, and an attempted coup after military members rebelled due to poor pay and benefits, not due to ethnic tensions (Bah 2015, 77-78). It should be noted that Bah argues that Guinean presidents coalesced the military into a single ethnicity. In 1989, the first Liberian civil war erupted due to ethnic tensions. During the 1980s, the Ivory Coast maintained relative stability but suffered an attempted coup in 1991 which was not due to ethnic tensions.

In the 1990s, both Liberia and Guinea suffered from instability and violence. The first Liberian civil war concluded in 1996, and Guinea suffered an attempted coup that same year due to authoritarian rule and a poor economy. Charles Taylor assumed the Presidency of Liberia in 1997, and violence against the Mandingo minority who lived on the border of Guinea began. In 2000, this erupted into a civil war contributed to ethnic violence and rebels trained in Guinea (Call 2010, 352). Simultaneously Guinea's military

government grew more authoritarian as it historically saw a strong military combined with authoritarianism as a mechanism to prevent external violence from spilling into the country (Bah 2015, 79-81).

In 1999, the Ivory Coast suffered its first successful coup in which the military, dominated by southern Christians gained power. After unfair elections in 2002, an attempted coup occurred and a civil war erupted between the Christian south and Sunni Muslim north. Violence in Liberia ended in 2003 when Taylor stepped down from power (Call 2010, 352). During the 2000s, violence in Guinea escalated into a coup in 2008 after increased authoritarian rule and the death of the President (Bah 2015, 83). In 2007, the Ivory Coast civil war ended as the warring religious factions agreed to share power. The peace dissolved into another civil war after the Christian south candidate and military leader refused to accept the election results. Eventually a French led UN peace plan was agreed to which resolved the conflict and both sides agreed to the election results (CIA 2011, 168-171).

Military

The military line of effort is measured by military influence in government affairs. Beginning in 1960 through 1980 the militaries of Guinea and the Ivory Coast played a growing role in each nation's security. They gained both tactical capability and leadership skills from their Soviet and French trainers. In Liberia, the military did not play a prominent role in instigating instability. Liberia experienced a coup in 1980, led by military members, but it was triggered by governmental neglect of the population's social needs. Liberia experienced an attempted coup in 1985 and two civil wars from 1989-1996

and 2002-2007. The civil wars consisted of warring ethnic factions, to include the military (Call 2010, 347-369).

Guinea experienced their first successful coup in 1984 which led to an increase in military influence on governmental affairs as the new president, Lansana Conte, maintained his military status. Eventually the gradual rise in military influence led to an attempted coup in 1985 and again in 1996 when military leaders felt their benefits or pay was insufficient (Bah 2015, 77). The influence of the military in affairs in Guinea continued to grow as the president sought to pacify military leaders by giving them prized positions in government and the military. Eventually a successful coup led by the military took place after Conte died in 2008. In 2010, the military handed control over to a civilian led government due to both international and domestic pressure after the Presidential Guards opened fire on a civilian protest (Bah 2015, 83).

The Ivory Coast experienced attempted coups in 1991 and 1995 as the government failed to meet the population's needs. This was a result of limited government revenue due to low commodity prices combined with a growing need to buy internal stability from military leaders (N'Diaye 2000, 256-258). In 1999, the Ivory Coast experienced a successful military led coup in which dissatisfied officers assumed power. Another attempted coup, took place in 2002 after the election in which the military was involved in the violence. The military's exact role in the coup is unknown. The civil war was resolved in 2007 but resumed after the 2010 election. A UN peacekeeping force led by France intervened in 2010, (CIA 2011, 168-171).

The proposed operational approach depicts the operational environment and its effects on coups in the context of time. The lines of effort as applied to Guinea, the Ivory

Coast, and Liberia depict each line of efforts relationship with instability and the consequential coups. They also depict a cycle and loosely related patterns of instability. Step 1 established a basic understanding of the countries studied and West Africa within an abbreviated PMESII format. Step 2 is the method of interpreting the operational approach which allows us to understand and visualize the “how” in relation to coups. Next, the application of the information gained from the data collected from research will be applied to the evaluation criteria to better understand the secondary research questions relationships with coups.

Step 3: Application of the Evaluation Criteria

The third step is the application of the evaluation criteria to the data collected in the research. This step applies the evaluation criteria to each secondary research question and subsequently answers the primary research question “Do coups in West Africa serve as an effective tool to understand where US involvement in West Africa can contribute to or end conflict?” The evaluation criteria assess the operational environment economically, externally, ethnically/religiously, and militarily.

Each criterion is assessed through its contribution by country to each instability event on a two-part scale. The two-part scale delineates whether the criterion served as the primary instigator of instability and assigned two points or the secondary instigator of instability and assigned one point. Events will be judged based on their level of severity: minor/violent protest (one point), major/failed coup (two points), or coup/civil war (three points). Once each criterion is assessed against each instability event, the criterion weight will be cumulated, and then multiplied by the event weight to determine the criteria's general contribution to instability. A higher score indicates greater contribution to

instability. Each criterion will be judged individually, and defended based on their contribution to each level of severity as shown below:

Table 2. Response Evaluation Criteria			
Question	Nation	Major (2 points)	Coup (3 points)
1) Instability tied to economic tensions?	Guinea	$1+1=2*2=4$	$2+1=3*3=9$
	Ivory Coast	$2+1+1=3*2=6$	$1*3=3$
	Liberia		$1+1=2*3=6$

Source: Created by author based on Sylvan Smith, “If We Won’t, Who Will? The Employment of the United States Army to Combat Potential Pandemic Outbreaks in West Africa” (Master’s thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2015), 26.

Criterion1: Which coups are tied to economic tensions? The operational approach captures fifteen instability events to include civil war and coups, which are classified as major events, and six attempted coups, which are classified as minor events. The economy played a secondary role in the instability in each nation. The operational approach begs the question, which came first? The chicken or the egg? Economic troubles played at least a minor role in Guinea and the Ivory Coast, two nations that were former colonies of France. In the context of criterion, the economy only served as the primary contributor of the 1984 coup in Guinea as it was the most prevalent issue in the country when the longtime president passed away. This proves that economic troubles can serve as a primary contributor to coups in the event of a transition in government.

Table 3. Response Evaluation Criteria			
Question	Nation	Major (2 points)	Coup (3 points)
2) Instability tied to external interests in West Africa?	Guinea Ivory Coast Liberia	$1+1=3*2=6$	$1+1=2*3=6$

Source: Created by author based on Sylvan Smith, “If We Won’t, Who Will? The Employment of the United States Army to Combat Potential Pandemic Outbreaks in West Africa” (Master’s thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2015), 26.

Criterion 2: Which coups are tied to external interests in West Africa? The operational approach establishes that external involvement in West Africa can play a role in contributing to violence at the regional level. The attempted 1985 coup in Liberia was executed by ethnic minorities who held significant majorities in Guinea. The involvement of ECOMAG in Liberia during the civil war from 1989-1996 played a significant role in contributing to the conflict as external powers adopted sides (Call 2010, 356-359). In addition, ethnic minorities from Guinea played a major role in fueling the 2000-2003 civil war.

Table 4. Response Evaluation Criteria			
Question	Nation	Major (2 points)	Coup (3 points)
3) Instability tied to ethnic or religious tensions?	Guinea Ivory Coast Liberia	$2*2=4$ $1+1=2*2=4$ $2*2=4$	$2+2=4*3=12$ $2+2+2=6*3=18$

Source: Created by author based on Sylvan Smith, “If We Won’t, Who Will? The Employment of the United States Army to Combat Potential Pandemic Outbreaks in West Africa” (Master’s thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2015), 26.

Criterion 3: What coups are tied to ethnic or religious tensions? Ethnic and religious tensions have the highest link to instability in West Africa. They most frequently serve as the instigator of violence in Liberia and the Ivory Coast. They also play a significant role in Guinea, but do not serve as the dominant source of instability. The successful attempt by the former presidents of Guinea in coalescing the military into the mindset of a single ethnicity skews these results.

Table 5. Response Evaluation Criteria			
Question	Nation	Major (2 points)	Coup (3 points)
4) Instability involving military leadership?	Guinea	$1+1=2*2=4$	$2+2=4*3=12$
	Ivory Coast	$2+1+1=4*2=8$	$2+1+1=4*3=12$
	Liberia	$1*2=2$	$1+1+1=3*3=12$

Source: Created by author based on Sylvan Smith, “If We Won’t, Who Will? The Employment of the United States Army to Combat Potential Pandemic Outbreaks in West Africa” (Master’s thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2015), 26.

Criterion 4: Which coups involve military leadership? The evaluation response criteria confirm linkages between military involvement in government and the probability of a coup. While the military is a primary vehicle to executing a coup, it does not appear to be the primary contributor to coups. Regardless, excessive military involvement in traditionally civilian sectors of government serves as an indicator of instability in West Africa.

Step 4: Answer Primary Research Question

Step 4: After having applied the evaluation criteria, the fourth step in the research design is to aggregate and present the findings. This subsequently leads to answering the primary research question.

Table 6. Response Evaluation Criteria						
Question	Nation	Major (2 pts)	Total Major	Coup (3 points)	Total Coup	Total
1) Instability tied to economic tensions?	Guinea Ivory Coast Liberia	$1+1=2*2=4$ $2+1+1=3*2=6$	10	$2+1=3*3=9$ $1*3=3$ $1+1=2*3=6$	18	28
2) Instability tied to external interests in West Africa?	Guinea Ivory Coast Liberia	$1+1=3*2=6$	6	$1+1=2*3=6$	6	12
3) Instability tied to ethnic or religious tensions?	Guinea Ivory Coast Liberia	$2*2=4$ $1+1=2*2=4$ $2*2=4$	12	$2+2=4*3=12$ $2+2+2=6*3=18$	30	42
4) Instability involving military leadership?	Guinea Ivory Coast Liberia	$1+1=2*2=4$ $2+1+1=4*2=8$ $1*2=2$	14	$2+2=4*3=12$ $2+1+1=4*3=12$ $1+1+1=3*3=9$	33	47

Source: Created by author based on Sylvan Smith, “If We Won’t, Who Will? The Employment of the United States Army to Combat Potential Pandemic Outbreaks in West Africa” (Master’s thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2015), 26.

The evaluation criterion suggests that coups can serve as a method to determine where US involvement in West Africa can contribute to or end conflict. An economic condition in a country primarily serves as an underlying cause of instability, but not a primary instigator of coups unless it is overlaid with a peaceful transition of government. Regional external interests play a role in instability, but are not a primary instigator of

coups. Major Powers, such as France and the United States did not directly contribute to instability in West Africa. Ethnic and religious tensions play the single largest role in contributing to coups. Military control of traditionally civilian roles in the government and economy serve as visible indicator of potential instability.

Chapter Summary

Do coups in West Africa serve as an effective tool to understand where US involvement in West Africa can contribute to or end conflict? The data and research suggest the answer to the primary research question is yes. Applying the data found in answering the secondary research questions suggest that historical analysis of coups allows us to understand the operational environment. Furthermore, the application of the operational approach allows us to understand patterns of the operational environment in the context of time. That being said, using this information includes risk as the data must be inferred to other nations in the region. To more thoroughly understand the effects of US involvement, studies of involvement in the Middle East, Colombia, and the Balkans must be applied in conjunction with this research. Findings and recommendations are found in chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter Introduction

As we know, data suggests coups in West Africa serve as an effective tool to understand where US involvement in West Africa can contribute to or end conflict. Effective, in this paper and in the context of US involvement, is defined as positive long term effects in the region that last beyond one generation. This includes but is not limited to governments in the region ability to execute the following: manage trade, build and maintain infrastructure such as roads and ports, secure borders and provide security without violating human rights, provide basic health services required to prevent an epidemic, and ensuring free and fair elections in which power is transferred peacefully.

During the course of this research of West Africa, it became evident that while no contributing factor can determine the exact effect of US involvement in West Africa, they can provide expectation management. As Thucydides and Hobbes write, war is the result of incalculable root causes tied to elements of man's emotion such as fear, pride, diffidence, or glory. Despite this, my research confirms social and economic factors mentioned by economist such as Rosecrance and Schumpeter contribute to instability, and eventually war at certain points in time. Furthermore, they are connected to the secondary research question regarding military involvement as the military was heavily tied to economic instability and ethnic/religious tensions. While this research does not provide a silver bullet to effective US involvement in a conflict, it provides planners a tool to quickly determine a starting point when attempting to identify the problem.

Conclusions

The study suggests that coups can serve as an effective tool to understand where US involvement in West Africa can contribute to or end conflict. The analysis of literature proves that nations in West Africa follow a pattern of political development consisting of conflict and cooperation (Agyeman-Duah 1990, 549-50). The application of the evaluation criteria provides data that sheds light on the patterns leading to instability within West Africa. The research subsequently provides insight into the role external powers play to ensure stability.

The study can also be employed to determine what forces contribute to stability in West Africa. The study highlights the conditions leading to instability, and what conditions contribute the most to instability. In addition, the study by default mentions conditions that brought stability after each cycle of violence.

When reading the study, it must be remembered that the current operational environment must be fully evaluated. It should be applied to assist in understanding operational environment in West Africa. The study only generalizes each cycle of instability within the Ivory Coast, Guinea, and Liberia. Therefore, when applying the findings of this study, you should consider historical, religious, ethnic, economic, and external influence.

Recommendations

Recommendations for decision makers

Decision makers must understand the relationship of both the regional organizations advocating intervention and the nature of the crisis. Specifically, the US must understand the relationship between each opposing party and the regional

organization. Failing to do so can inflame violence as seen in Liberia in the 1990s when ECOWAS created ECOMOG and supported Charles Taylor. This action set the conditions for human rights abuses and a second civil war that culminated with Taylor's conviction and fifty year sentence for human rights abuses.

Decision makers must also understand the intensity of the conflict to avoid another incident similar to what the French suffered in the Ivory Coast when French peacekeepers were attacked by Ivory Coast aircraft. If possible, military forces must establish liaisons with peacekeepers to ensure they are not attacked. The last major consideration is the growing Islamist threat in West Africa. This is prominent in Mali, Ivory Coast, and Nigeria. Instability resulting from poor economic conditions, a transition in government, or disenfranchisement of minority populations can create an envelope for Islamic extremist to exploit and gain influence, further destabilizing the conflict. Therefore, the religious and ethnic tensions within a conflict must be fully understood in West Africa. This is true in each country that has a sizable Christian and Muslim population. Failure to do so can prolong or further inflame violence.

Recommendations for researchers

The economic situation in West Africa is not fully mature and can lead to more conflict in the future. A rising middle class will demand more equality and transparency in government. This new found influence of the middle class, combined with the growth of communication technologies and mediums, present a new instability paradigm for West Africa. This paradigm can mature over the next 15-25 years as technical and bureaucratic expertise within the region grows. I recommend more research into the

effect of economics contribution to conflict in West Africa as this area presents an immature problem set within the West African culture.

The role of major powers providing stability in the region should be explored in further detail. The combination of regional organizations, worldwide intergovernmental organizations, and a major power that has respected historical ties to an unstable nation tends to bring stability. Data found in research for this thesis suggests that major powers with historical ties to West Africa reduce violence rather than create instability. The initial assumption when beginning this research was historical powers creates instability. The role of France - within the Ivory Coast and Mali - should be studied in depth as a potential template for western powers to execute stability operations.

The role of the United States' history of intervention throughout the world to include both successes and failings should be researched to better understand the effects of potential operations in West Africa. Without further research on this topic, the US is forced to infer from other powers the effects of future operations in West Africa. Additional research or the application of current research in the area allows for identification of trends during various phases of US intervention. Furthermore, this information can be overlaid on the findings in this thesis to better understand the effects of US intervention in West Africa.

The last area of research is the level of involvement of the military in traditionally civilian ministries. History suggests that the military can play a major role in infrastructure development and disaster relief. Understanding instances where the military played a positive role during the 1970s in Guinea may provide a template for both internal and external support to local governments by military forces. Furthermore,

researching which parts of the government, when dominated by the military, is a signal that a coup or instability is likely, will allow the United States more time to prepare or intervene in a deteriorating situation.

Final Thoughts

At the beginning of this study, I assumed that religious or ethnic violence would be the primary contributor to coups and instability in West Africa. Historically this is not the case as excessive military involvement in civilian sectors of the government contributed to instability, which was subsequently inflamed by ethnic or religious tensions. As the young nations of West Africa mature, this paradigm can shift, but the operational approach and evaluation criteria remain credible tools to understand the operational environment in West Africa.

Peace is not the absence of conflict; it is the ability to handle conflict by peaceful means

—Ronald Reagan

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